

JUDAISM AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICT

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Group conflict is constituted by a series of unique human beings who evolve, for one reason or another, into a complex interaction of adversarial relationships. In order to understand this we cannot suppress the roots of that human being, or group of human beings, in the historical cultures and religions from which they have emerged. Connecting the human being to his cultural moorings will help us understand why and when he fights and why and when he makes peace. It will give us tools to help the human being travel in the direction of peacemaking by reconnecting the individual to his cultural moorings. If those cultural moorings have ways of peacemaking then they may resonate in ways that no other peace processes will. If those cultural moorings are conflict generating, then we may see what needs to change for her culturally and/or psychologically in ways that normal theories of conflict may not be able to perceive. This holds true of very large political/military events that may have nothing to do, on the surface, with religion or culture. Often the rituals, myths, and metaphors of a community—especially in the modern context—are buried in oblique spaces that are not supposed to affect public behavior. But they do.

The task of this study is to uncover these deeper roots of conflict as it pertains to Judaism and the Jewish community, and apply what can be learned to the challenges as well as the possibilities in Palestinian-Israeli relations over the coming decades. There are many interlacing subsets of this conflict, including the inter-monotheistic ones, as well as the larger Arab-Israeli and Western-Arab conflicts. Furthermore, as I have delineated elsewhere, internal conflicts of both Palestinian and Israeli society over the role of religion play an important role, in addition to internal psychodynamic problems with the post-Holocaust Zionist community as well as with the post-Catastrophe community of Palestinians.[\[1\]](#)

The role of religion in perpetuating the principal conflict hardly needs delineation: Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Jewish assassins, nationalist religious parties, aggressive seizing of land in the name of God, suicide-mass murder in the name of God, outside religious entities with vested interests in worsening the conflict, Jerusalem as an object of desire and conquest by all three religions, holy sites as burgeoning reifications of conflict. But there is even more below the surface. It is essential, therefore, as an outgrowth of such analysis, to integrate the relevant cultural values of these peoples into a deepened peacemaking process. This has not been attempted until now by most scholars of conflict, conflict resolution activists, or diplomats, and the results are a superficial, fragile (barely existent, as of this writing) peace process that has not truly penetrated into the moral consciousness and collective behavior of either side. This is our task.

As an alternative to this tragically inadequate process, an integration of imagery, metaphor, law and ritual that is old and familiar can have profound effects on peacemaking which we will describe below. It allows for a way to move the hermeneutics of othering, which is typical of intentional monotheistic communities,

into more benign and less violent or apocalyptic expressions. But this is not enough for our task.

CONFLICT, INJURY AND TRANSFORMATION

The cultural/hermeneutic capacity to transform old religious categories of exclusion or hatred is only one part of the battle to build a relationship between former enemies. The latter prepares the theological groundwork for a hermeneutic transformation inside the religious person's and community's mindset. The outer expressions of religious belief and practice need to be read inwardly or internalized in such a way that "enemy" is no longer a particular person or group that used to be the object of aggression.

The problem is that there is much more that retards peacemaking than a failure to re-read tradition, formidable a challenge as the latter is. Re-reading tradition is a major social challenge for a religious community whose structural integrity depends upon agreed upon categories of meaning, as well as principles of inclusion and exclusion. But intertwined with this, in a very complicated way, are personal and collective injuries, the scars of conflict and violence.

Scars endure due to human interactions as "soft" as daily sources of humiliation, disdain, or dishonor, as well as to hard things, like torture and murder of loved ones. All involve losses that are either difficult or impossible to restore. The more one's psyche is wedded to these losses, and the more devoted one has been to lost objects of love and veneration, the more sickening it would be to think of trading in one's condition of "perpetuated mourning" for cheap replacements, like economic compensation or some form of economic opportunity in peace time. In fact, this kind

of principled rejectionism and refusal of “bribes” should be at least honored by observers and intervenors as a positive expression of moral principle, as destructive as it may be for peace in the short term. The more intense one’s feelings for and devotion to those who have suffered or died the more problematic, even obnoxious, will rational solutions appear to be. In fact, they will feel like insulting bribes.

‘Perpetuated mourning’ is a state in which human beings find one way or another to keep old wounds open, to keep attachment to the loss by perpetuating some state of affairs in which that loss is kept at the surface level of experience, in addition to the perpetuation of moral justifications for that position. This is a vital way in which people keep what they have lost as close to home as possible. It is also a way to avoid the guilt of living well or happily as a group, which could easily be interpreted as a betrayal of those people and things that one has lost. Lost things could also include an idealized state of relationship with God in the distant past, or a time of glorious sovereignty in an idealized past.

Organized religion plays an important role in perpetuated mourning. A significant percentage of Jewish prayer and ritual is dedicated to mourning losses of the past, beseeching God to forgive the sins that have led to the losses understood and framed as “punishments”, as well as prayers to punish the enemies who caused these injuries. The Biblical book of Psalms, shared by all three monotheisms, is replete with these kind of prayers. For much of Jewish history, the images conjured by these ancient prayers had very real counterparts in the immediate experience of prejudice, cultural humiliation, or actual persecution.

It is no accident that, in effect, the Psalmist, traditionally King David, is the godfather, if you will, of traditional Jewish prayer. The psalms attributed to David combine an intense and creative religiosity that offers the comfort of a personal and

privileged relationship to God. It also entails an honest process of self-judgment, which is combined in subtle ways with a vivid recreation of persecution at the hands of enemies. It sets up an existence wherein God is the only refuge and ultimate salvation for the righteous. This fits perfectly (or formed?) the Jewish penchant for strong self-criticism and drive to repentance which merges in an artful way with a persecution consciousness.

The trouble with prayer, devotion, and the construction of universes of meaning that become deeply embedded is that they tend to not only explain the vicissitudes of life, and thus give comfort and reassurance. They also tend to create reality by forming the mindset of the adherent, and thus making it hard to change reality. This combination of making sense of reality by softening its blows and simultaneously creating a rigid pattern of reality is a constant in most religious meaning systems that I have studied, East as well as West. Comfort in the discovery of meaning seems to always come at the price of rigid conformity to that very meaning system which, at least sometimes, is perpetuating some form of self-imposed misery.

This kind of internalized mental structure of the world is so powerful that, in moments of tension and uncertainty, when other human beings may or may not perceive existential danger, this group may short circuit creative possibilities for peace. They may fall back upon the emotionally and philosophically familiar consciousness of persecution as an existential constant, expressed so powerfully in the old rabbinic adage, “It is a law (of the order of the world), Esau (gentiles) will always hate Jacob (the Jewish people).” [\[2\]](#)

There is no question, however, that, beyond the manufactured cultural character of mourning based on habit, there is a very real set of injuries that run very deep in communities that have suffered terrible losses over large spans of time. It is

certainly the case, therefore, that formal and informal mourning processes are the only way we know of that human beings cope with these kind of losses.

Generally speaking, included in traditional mourning processes over these losses is a corresponding attribution of blame to traditional enemies. This is not always the case, and, in fact, religion does have in its cultural repertoire something unavailable in ethno-nationalist thought. Often, perhaps too often, Biblical religion holds the individual, as well as the religious community, accountable for its own troubles. Simple interpretations of Biblical religion assume God to be both directly cognizant of and responsible for day to day tribulations. Thus, if God is both all-powerful and perfectly good then human beings must be responsible for their own tragedies.

This can make people sick with internalized guilt for things that they have never done, responsible for the death of loved ones due to some ethical act or even minor ritual that they failed to do. It can get quite brutal as an agent of control and psychological punishment. At the same time, however, it can lead to a level of self-examination for troubles, a reaction that is absolutely impossible for ethno-nationalist psychology. The latter is nothing less than self-worship or narcissism, and therefore cannot admit of basic flaws in the group.

PATTERNS OF ABRAHAMIC RECONCILIATION: ACT, RITUAL AND SYMBOL AS TRANSFORMATION

Despite the difficulty with the aspects of religion and culture that demonize the outsider, and hold him to blame for all problems, the fact is that religious cultures are very complex and paradoxical. The reservoir of possible religious reactions to conflict

is much larger than one could imagine. Our critical task, then, is to mine many other sources that give rise to other, counter-veiling hermeneutic possibilities and psychological reactions to the world. We should then examine how Judaism teaches people who are enemies to fundamentally change as they confront each other.

While many of the processes of change outlined below are brilliant and insightful, and in many ways have much to teach modern conflict resolution theorists and practitioners, they suffer from flaws. The major flaw by far, shared almost universally in all religions that I have studied, is the limitation of these insights and processes to enemy systems deemed by the religious culture to be unacceptable, such as within a community of Jews who all conform to traditional *halakha*/Jewish law. However, the same insights and processes are suppressed vis à vis the chosen enemies of the particular religious system. The latter can include those who choose not to practice or believe, those who did but now reject it, those whose spiritual decisions about practice or belief differ from some human/religious authority structure that claims divine or historic sanction, and large groups that threaten or stand in the way of the expansion or maintenance of power by the organized structure of the religion.

This flaw is singly responsible for the suffering and death of countless millions of people in the history of religion, and certainly in the history of the Abrahamic faiths. Needless to say, despite some restrictive and even violent religious laws and dogmas, there are countless religious adherents in history who were not responsible for the latter, and who read their traditions within a mental framework of the deepest humanity. They either re-read or selected the most humane paradigm of their tradition.[\[3\]](#) Nevertheless, the anti-social tendency in many religious texts, and the uses thereof for violence, remains a principal challenge that cannot be denied.

It is therefore the case that, as we examine the methods of interpersonal transformation, there is a contemporary need to negotiate and expand the boundaries of the moral universe of Judaism specifically as the latter addresses the ethics of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

What is less acknowledged and analyzed is how the extension of pro-social values to outsiders is often complexified and contradicted by existential fears of the group. This is a very subtle and deadly challenge. With every effort to extend moral boundaries outward, there is a corresponding backlash that we see in history to contract the moral universe of a religious or cultural group. This is as true of the Jewish community as a whole as it is of sub-sectors such as the *haredim*.

Let us now enter into the hermeneutic foundations of pro-social engagement, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and restoration of relationship. I want to begin with the concept and practice of forgiveness because it plays such a fundamental, albeit it complex, role globally in religious responses to conflict.

There is no question that divine emulation, *imitatio dei*, is critical in Judaism. Emulation in terms of compassion has clear sources [\[4\]](#), but emulation specifically in terms of forgiveness is not as universally known. But God as the principal source of forgiveness does become a paradigm for human beings in Judaism.

The standard emphasis of rabbinic Judaism rests squarely on forgiveness as embedded in a process of change that is initiated by the person who did something wrong. In this sense, crime, change, and forgiveness are embedded in the much larger practice and metaphysical reality of *teshuva*, which could be translated as repentance, returning, transformation, or restoration. *Teshuva*, the capacity to transform oneself or a community, is considered to be one of the most sublime elements of faith in a good,

forgiving God. The fact that repentance can change a guilty verdict, and even sin itself, is a great blessing. Resh Lakish exclaimed, “Great is repentance, for it transforms intentional sins (*zedonot*) into sins of negligence or forgetting (*shegagot*).”^[5] And in another version, “Great is repentance for it turns intentional crimes into testimonies for a person’s goodness.”^[5] The last quote presumably means that the degree of evil in the crime is now matched by the heroic effort it took on the part of the sinner to change what he was like, which turns the previous crime into a testimony for the person’s present goodness. The discrepancy between the two versions of Resh Lakish’s aphorism is solved Talmudically by suggesting that the latter refers to someone who repents out of love, while the former is someone who repents out of fear.^[6]

There is also an important rabbinic idea, which is critical for Jewish consciousness, that true repentance comes when the person stands again in the same place, with the same opportunity to do the crime, and then resists it.^[7] This will be important later, in terms of strategies of building trust between enemies, but for now it suggests some concern with whether processes of repentance, confessions of wrongdoing, are really authentic unless they have some external reality. In fact, the rabbis suggest limits to the legitimacy of repentance. For example, if someone sins and repents three times, the fourth is not believed and he is not forgiven. But this last conclusion may reflect the legal/spiritual court system of the rabbis and how to handle repeat offenders. On a Divine-human plane, there are numerous sources, both Biblical and rabbinic, that suggest that the patience of God, and the willingness to accept *ba’ale teshuva*, people who repent, is infinite, an eternal feature of the existence itself.^[8]

There are several interacting themes of forgiveness at work in these sources.

There is, as stated, the idea of *teshuva*, repentance. There is *mehila*, which is the standard word for forgiveness, but there is also *seliha*, which is sometimes translated as pardon and sometimes as forgiveness. *Seliha* is translated in Psalms 130:4 as “the power to forgive”. [\[9\]](#) There is also the metaphor of wiping away or blotting out sin. [\[10\]](#) There is, of course, the concept of atonement, *kapparah*, but it is the wiping away, the pardoning and forgiving that is stressed in many prayers, both Biblical and rabbinic, and often accompanied by the hope that this process is not accompanied by suffering.

Suffering is considered an atonement for sin, but the praying person expresses hope for those paths of atonement that do not entail suffering. Finally, it should be emphasized that the prayers, both daily and for special occasions, stress that Divine forgiveness is a perpetual activity, and that this is an ongoing process between God and human being that literally requires permanent patience on God’s part. [\[11\]](#)

Another crucial phrase is *over al pesha*, literally passing over or overlooking sin, and *noseh avon*, literally carrying the burden of the sin. [\[12\]](#) All of these Divine qualities entail forgiveness, forbearance, patience, a resistance to anger, in addition to the obvious quality of mercy in overlooking someone’s guilt. God, in these texts, is the ultimate knower of sin. He knows just how guilty everyone is, in ways that are far more expansive than the sins that the public occasionally witnesses. Thus God’s continuing to sustain human beings, to nurture their bodies from moment to moment, knowing full well the extent of their failings, is seen as a perpetual commitment to mercy, forgiveness and patience. God loves and sustains every living human body even as the same God is conscious at every moment of the failings of the occupant of

that body. This willingness to nurture at the very same time that one is cognizant of another's failure is the quintessential quality of a forgiving being.

This theological foundation is critical to understanding what is hoped for in the personality of the human being who is called upon to forgive those who have hurt her. The rabbis characterize forgiveness as something that should come immediately if it is clear that someone is embarrassed by what she has done or if she feels guilty about it.[\[13\]](#) In fact, there is a surprising notion of a person having a right to forgiveness when he has clearly repented and is now living a decent life. He may even insist upon it.[\[14\]](#) The right to forgiveness is an interesting concept that should be explored further.

In all of the above cases forgiveness is seen as a kind of *quid pro quo* for the moral transformation of the person. In interpersonal terms, it involves a bilateral, formal process that also has internal elements. But it seems that the rabbis saw something in forgiveness that goes beyond a bilateral process. They stated, for example, that anyone who cries at the death of a good person is forgiven for all his sins[\[15\]](#), that if someone is a good, kind man but he buries a child, then all his sins are forgiven,[\[16\]](#) that if even one person does authentic *teshuva*, repentance, it is enough to forgive the entire world (!).[\[17\]](#)

This last point is particularly astonishing, and it suggests that there is an independent power that forgiveness has on a metaphysical level that extends well beyond a simple tit for tat of one sin, one repentance and one forgiveness for that sin. But it is also clear that most of the emphasis of this literature is the responsibility of individuals who have hurt someone else, or sinned against God, to initiate the process of change themselves, and only then receive a response from the injured other.

There is, however, an accompanying body of literature that suggests a unilateral process whereby the pious individual who forbears the hurts of others, who is patient with them, and who surrenders his own principles, or at least overlooks his indignation and sense of right and wrong, is acting in a patient fashion, as God does. This is seen as classic *imitatio dei*. Patience seems to be the key idea here. Vengeance, even if it is justified, is seen as the opposite of this divine quality. This is where the ideas of *over al pеша* and *noseh avon* come into play. [\[18\]](#)

There is an important interplay of several related concepts here. Arrogance or “hardness of the face” (*azut panim*), which is considered the opposite of humility, characterizes someone who never surrenders or wipes away his own principles. He always stands in a hard way before people. He is vengeful. The vengeful person never forgives his friends who have injured him. This, in turn, causes conflict and hatred. The person who is perpetually angry is also the one who cannot surrender his own positions, and this too leads to revenge.

Several conclusions emerge. Forgiveness as a means of peacemaking must be accompanied by the cultivation of the kind of person who develops a sense of humility in human interactions, who disciplines herself in patience for long periods of time, who avoids a “hard face” or arrogance in his presentation of self to others, especially to enemies, who learns to control his anger, and who is willing to surrender his positions sometimes, even if he is in the right. [\[19\]](#)

Patience is critical here, and we should, therefore, delve more deeply into this characteristic. Firstly, emulation of Divine, infinite patience would suggest a lifetime of patience for the individual, whose “infinity”, as it were, is his or her own lifetime. Perhaps it would include even a sense of history, and the commitment to invest in human relationship building that may or may not result in true peace in his lifetime.

This takes both patience and faith in the future. A hopeful commitment to the future is another Divine characteristic to be emulated, as is evidenced by countless Biblical prophecies.

Patience also intimates a kind of self-sacrifice, and this is a characteristic that is particularly hard to get injured parties to embrace in conflict interactions. The self-sacrifice involves a temporary suspension of the demands of justice, a willingness to focus on the transformation of relationships in order to create a world in which the needs and demands of justice will be more fully realized. Patience is a temporary sacrifice of some of one's justifiable needs and demands in order to create a world in which those needs and demands will be more easily met by future generations.

On a deeper level, however, religious patience, especially as emulation of a divine being, suggests an expansion of one's perception of reality, a seeing of reality in terms of the future even more than from the perspective of the present or past. Only a divine being could do this perfectly, and yet the religious imagination here wisely perceives that a very long view of a human being, or group, almost requires patience from the point of view of common sense, or, in theological terms, wisdom.

Wisdom and experience prove that this individual or group of people will repudiate the worst of their behavior someday, when confronted with the evidence. Without even requiring compassion for an enemy or self-sacrifice, the wisdom of long views of time suggests that violent actions of enemies are at least as destructive to themselves as they are to others. The long view of time, or patience, knows that those who act so horrifically as to be indistinguishable from monsters will someday have grandchildren who will recoil in horror when confronted with the evidence, and will repudiate those actions, just as we have seen in a new generation of Germans, or Americans when confronted with what was done in Vietnam or to Native Americans.

In so doing, the very permanence that so many enemies seek by genocidal fantasies of eliminating others, such as “a thousand year Reich”, will be drowned in the shame and wish to forget of their descendants.

This long view of change requires enormous patience, but it is something that Judaism suggests is essential to processes of reconciliation. It requires building a relationship with future persons and a confidence that history proves time and again that those new persons will emerge and are emerging even as one expresses patience with their failures.

Jewish mystical tradition suggests a profound process of reconciliation involving forgiveness. A person should emulate God as the one who actively wipes away another’s sin. A person should take it upon himself to wipe away the sin of his fellow human being, and by virtue of this personal involvement in improving the life of the other, helping him with his failings, the offender becomes too ashamed to then revert to his old behaviors in front of the one who has generously helped him. This aid includes engaging the other even to the point of absorbing insults.

Similarly, a human being, like God, should forbear the sin of his fellow. With an enormous investment of patience, he should actually nurture the other, as God does, even as the other fails, suffering through this with him. In so doing, he stays with the other person until the person is “repaired” and the sin is wiped out. [\[20\]](#)

This has profound implications in terms of conflict resolution. The standard conflict resolution method of engaging the other involves bilateral processes of communication and negotiation. The latter involves, on a moral level, a subtle combination of two values, peace and justice, in which, for the sake of peace, you agree to the first stages of engaging the enemy other in a nonviolent meeting. But, for

the sake of justice, that engagement will not involve self-sacrifice to the point of self-abuse. And yet part of the process of helping someone to change in a religious sense, at least in the sources above, involves the acceptance of some humiliation. This is only possible because there is an implicit calculation of ethical values, namely, that it is worth occasionally absorbing insults in order to reach a deeper level of relationship with the estranged other.

We all are familiar with the ways in which we have done this with the people that we truly love, a father, mother, child, or lover. In the context of conflict dynamics, we yield to occasionally awful treatment (especially when we know that someone is going through a particularly traumatic time) which we would never accept from others, because we know that there is a higher goal and a deeper relationship which is too precious to sacrifice. We suffer occasional insults and see them as worth it, as we help someone who we love to change. Classic conflict resolution theory and psychology might suggest that none of these insults, large or small, should be tolerated. They certainly should not be buried or left un-addressed. But we know that we all do this--often--in order to preserve our most cherished relationships.

We rarely allow for this kind of sacrifice, however, for the sake of enemies that we do not know. And yet, this may help explain the difference between that part of a particular group which has been subject to serious violence who try to make peace, and those in the group who see these same peacemakers as traitors. The latter cannot comprehend the sacrificial element of peacemaking that we have been highlighting. Let me be specific. Many peacemakers often have rational, enlightened self-interest reasons that motivate their peace efforts, including the simple waste of resources in warfare, and the mutual destruction that it often entails. Or peacemakers sometimes rationally argue that much of the drive for security that justifies huge defense budgets

and mass violence could actually be achieved through careful, verifiable cooperation. Now these arguments for peace do not really evoke anger among the rejectionists, but rather accusations of naiveté.

Many other peacemakers, however, especially religious ones, often have some unmistakable sense of a connection of care for the enemy other. They apply to the enemy other, due to a perceived sense of common humanity, or common origin in God, a level of tolerance for evils done that everyone else usually reserves for family loved ones [\[21\]](#). How many of us have so often looked into the eyes of an enemy's little children and recoiled in horror at the prospect of injuring them? The peacemakers see abusive behavior of some in a group in the context of the overall humanity of that flawed group, which, in turn, is deserving of some kind of caring relationship. In fact, the flaws of the "other" evoke empathy, because the flaws suggest a common humanity, and also—that great generator of human bonds—they evoke a need that the "other" has for aid and understanding. All of this makes perfect sense in normal bonds that develop between lovers, even including the way in which we invariably hurt the ones we love. But extending this to the larger, injuring world is sensible to some and horrifying to others, an act of ultimate betrayal. This causes rage among those in a group who are not presently peacemakers.

The act of truly caring for an enemy group, while simultaneously caring for one's own (in other words, universal care) is the most difficult of all human challenges, requiring, in my opinion, years of psychological and spiritual training.

The true, disciplined peacemaker always acts as if she is the bridge between her community and the enemy community. Effectively, in halakhic/Jewish legal terminology, she must be able to contain within herself countervailing mitsvot, Divinely mandated deeds. She must seek to emulate all the Divine characteristics

mentioned above toward the enemy other, but she must also express all the love for special family, for the Jewish family, that the Biblical and rabbinic tradition requires. She must extend a helping hand to the suffering enemy, as Exodus 23 demands, while simultaneously expressing the special love of her people that the Torah expects.

As such, she must discover a pro-social relationship with the enemy other, but also maintain a caring relationship with her own group. Otherwise she is no longer a bridge, and therefore no longer an effective peacemaker. That is why it is difficult to escape judgment of the enemy as morally evil in some way, because if a person's group identity means anything then it must mean some sympathy with their pain and, therefore, moral outrage at their inflicted injuries. That having been said, the values of compassion, patience and overtures of friendship, are at the heart of these Biblical means of reaching out to the enemy, even as one judges him unfavorably. This is a difficult but not impossible path. It is no more difficult than the tortuous path of diplomacy taken by veteran mediators of the Oslo peace process, for example. It is simply a different kind of discipline that, in my opinion, can be cultivated in a great many people, though clearly not all or even most people. But it need not be cultivated in most people. If even a quarter of the adversaries in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict had cultivated these qualities, much of the violence could have been avoided. [\[22\]](#)

Let us now continue our investigation of Jewish approaches to reconciliation. I want to enter into a more detailed understanding of Jewish repentance and personal change. As history has proceeded there has been an effort on the part of numerous legal codifiers to collect and unify classical Jewish sources on any number of subjects, including repentance. In addition, there were various Jewish thinkers who collected Jewish traditions on repentance and developed a philosophy of repentance. [\[23\]](#)

One of the greatest Jewish legal minds and codifiers of all time was Maimonides (d. 1204). His codification of the procedure and basic elements of repentance contains significant insights into the process of change in relationships that we will develop further later on. [\[24\]](#) Maimonides' codification by no means represents the final word on the subject, but his codification was brilliant at eliciting all of the various strands of thought from the classical sources, and it is the variety of strands that interests us when facing damaged human relationships. The variety gives us many tools with which to change relationships.

Most prominent in the rabbinic notion of repentance is confession (*viduiy*) that contains within it the elements of specifying the wrong done, regret (*haratah*) and the commitment to a completely different future (*kabalah le-habah*). [\[25\]](#) This element of change is over and above--but never a substitute for--restitution, where restitution is called for by the law, such as in injury or theft. A “complete” repentance is one in which the opportunity to commit the crime presents itself again, and it is at that point that the person resists. This proves that the repentance is not due to some external fear or loss of physical strength, but due to an authentic change of heart. [\[26\]](#)

There are other elements of repentance that are not as fundamental but that enhance the process. These include crying, giving charity, public confession, in addition to privately expressing sorrow. There is also the notion of changing one's name as an expression of the idea that one is an utterly new human being now. Additionally, there is the concept of voluntary exile from one's home as a kind of penance for what one has done. Exile is considered so powerful a trauma that it becomes an additional atonement for the sins in question.

There is an additional requirement to engage in a kind of appeasement or process of gentleness in approaching the victim. In addition to restitution and

repentance there is a notion of making peace with this person by way of approaching this person and apologizing until this person forgives him (*piyyus*). If this does not work there was apparently a tradition of bringing three friends and apologizing before them and the victim, and doing this up to three times with three different sets of people. Maimonides suggests this as a last resort. But Rabbi Hisda, in the Talmudic period, recommended this as a formal requirement of repentance, replete with a ceremony of successive rows of three colleagues, on three separate occasions. [\[27\]](#)

Finally, the Talmud, as well as Maimonides, as a later codifier, recommended a procedure for the most tragic--and most common--circumstance in human injuries, when the victims are already dead. The perpetrator goes to the grave of the victim with ten people, confesses and asks forgiveness there. [\[28\]](#) If there is restitution due, it is given then to the heirs, and if there are no heirs, then it is given to the court, who presumably would distribute it to the community in as just a way as they could conceive.

One of the great dangers of this process of *piyyus* is how heavily focused it is on words, words that may or may not reflect the inner life of the perpetrator. Thus, the Talmud warns against those who do not mean what they say. This is a danger to any process based on words. [\[29\]](#) It does intimate that, although Jewish repentance has many elements that go beyond word to deed, it is unavoidable that the victim must at some point be willing to trust the words of a perpetrator. This is perhaps the most difficult step of all.

It should be noted finally that the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year, is a day completely devoted to repentance, in the form of repeated confessions in great detail. It is also a day characterized by great physical deprivation, in the form of fasting, among other things. This fasting character has an important

element of offering one's body and one's self to God. It is a kind of human sacrifice, a total offering like the ancient *olah*, whole burnt offering, and similar to what the Patriarch Isaac almost became, but without the bloodshed.

The metaphor of the death and sacrifice of the old and the creation of the new has powerful implications in terms of the psychology of enemy reconciliation. The notion or feeling of new relationship and a new "other" may be much easier to internalize for erstwhile enemies, where much damage has been done. Of course, in an enemy system, it would require a kind of mutual rebirth. This has many implications for the kind of rhetorical language that should be used by cultural leaders of Jews and Arabs as we move them toward symbolic ceremonies and mythic moments of transition.

There are some remarkable qualities of this process that suggest that *teshuva* can be a profoundly healing element of social change. Indeed, some of the rabbis speak of repentance as something that brings healing to the world. [30] That injury must be followed by confession, regret, and commitment to the future is a powerful antidote to the damage done to victims. It speaks directly to the need of victims for their story to be acknowledged as true. Thus, it speaks to memory, to one's basic sense of identity, to one's sense of justice, and, perhaps most importantly, to one's trust in a completely new future. A detailed confession is the hardest to elicit from perpetrators, especially when the crimes have gone in both directions such as in Israel, and as is so often the case universally. It is the most difficult of all to confess for two reasons: 1. It exposes the perpetrator to criminal prosecution and restitution, and 2. It often feels wrong to a perpetrator to do this in circumstances where crimes have been mutual.

After years of observation and reflection I have come to the conclusion that in circumstances of mutual injury it is best to take what you can get in terms of

reconciliation processes. It may be more than enough to create peace and reverse destructive cycles of violence if one can elicit from the parties a general regret about past action by key cultural and religious leaders and a commitment to a different future. This must be replicated for many sub-sectors of both societies in our conflict. But detailed confession may prove more elusive. On the other hand, detailed confession has a powerful impact on healing rage and allowing victims, and perhaps even perpetrators or their community, to move on. Denial of details has a way of festering for as long as people pass on the memory of the crime, which could be forever.

The efforts underway in Slovakia and many other places to create shared histories between enemy groups, which has been spearheaded by pioneers of psychodynamic conflict resolution such as Joe Montville, is in a certain sense a secular expression of the religious power of confession. But it is modulated to deal with the reality of conflicting histories and stories. At the end of the day, it is just as hard to predict the pro-social spiral of healing moments as it is to predict the destructive spirals of violence. General admissions of past mistakes may very well elicit more detailed and more powerful expressions of regret on both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Returning to the classical Jewish sources, “complete repentance” (*teshuva gemurah*), mentioned earlier, involves having the opportunity to commit the crime but resisting it now when the same opportunity for crime presents itself. This speaks to the distrust the victims justifiably have for the words of perpetrators. This is often an elusive circumstance of peace processes wherein security measures have been taken to ensure that the violence is not repeated. Or, quite often, there is total defeat of one side, and the opportunity to commit the same crime is gone, such as we have seen in

Nazi Germany. Much is gained in guaranteeing security for former victims, but something is also lost. Because without a repeat of the circumstances it is doubtful that real trust can ever develop again. That is a price worth paying in circumstances of deadly violence, but we should still acknowledge the power of *teshuva gemurah* as a tool of conflict resolution, and perhaps creatively conceive of ways that, at least symbolically, we may be able to capture the force of this experience.

The power of venting the deep emotions involved in injury through crying is self-evident. What is not as evident is how important it may be for people who have injured or been injured to witness each others' tears. Of course, the cultural variation regarding public display of emotion is self-evident, but the Jewish sources here speak to the power of tears in reconciliation, in the search for authenticity and trust, and it should be not taken lightly. How often have communities, which have been involved in terrible crimes, buried the tears of countless members who cry in private over the crimes that loved ones committed. But they never shared those tears with the victims or survivors! But how can the victims know the inner life of these people, if the tears are not shared?

There is a video that comes out of the encounters between the relatives of Jewish victims of Palestinian terror and Palestinian relatives of victims of Jewish violence. This involves ongoing meetings between these two groups in Gaza and elsewhere that have been spearheaded by the wonderful work of Yitshak Frankenthal and Yehuda Wachsman, both of whom lost children. This short video is the most simple and wrenching witness to transformation of relationships and shared mourning that I have ever seen. Tears are at its core, though in a subtle and honorable way. The video manages to capture at least a glimpse of the profound relationships being built, and it deserves as much support as the world can give it.

Charity and acts of kindness as a kind of penance are yet another way that Judaism recommends going beyond the word of repentance to the deed. It is also a vital way to combine peace and justice, the latter being essential for most conflicts. Just recently I received a detailed report concerning a Jewish community Friday night prayer service, in which the non-Jewish public of Sacramento were invited to attend. [\[31\]](#) This followed an unprecedented burning of three synagogues in that city, and it has evoked a powerful governmental and private communal response. The event was packed with people of every religion in Sacramento, including a large contingent from a national Methodist convention taking place in the city at the same time.

At one point a woman went up to the podium who represented the local region of the Methodist church. She made a donation of \$4000 toward the rebuilding of the synagogue library. This evoked a gasp from the Jews present, a two minute applause, and much crying from the Jews present. It represented to at least one Jewish witness a complete reversal of history, a move beyond pious words of apology, to an unprecedented--in his mind--effort of Christians to help Jews rebuild their religious lives. This is what hit him the hardest in terms of healing the legacy of injury and suspicion that he had grown used to as a Jew. The Christian community was investing in the future life of the Jewish community, not just reacting with guilt to their death or suffering.

In a related point, the literal demonstration of a change in one's identity is another powerful notion of repentance that occurs in various expressions of the Abrahamic traditions. In Judaism, the idea of changing one's name certainly begins with the founding Patriarch himself, whose name is changed by God from Abram to Abraham, according to the Genesis story. [\[32\]](#) How we could translate this notion into

qualitatively changing interpersonal and intergroup relationships, and even their identity or presentation of self to other, is an interesting challenge that would require some creative ideas from the practitioners in the field. We cannot and should not over-prescribe detailed applications of our conclusions, but rather point the way to practitioners to discover, by trial and error, the most effective and powerful courses of action.

Voluntary exile as repentance brings up some interesting issues, especially where conflict and violence have been due to land dispute. Place and identity are integrally related for most people on the planet. But exile has a way of bringing the issue of identity into a different light. Exile in Jewish tradition represents punishment, but it also is a means of purification, a way of teaching humility, and a way of avoiding the idolatry associated with land or the abuse of land that led to the original exile of the whole people in 586 B.C.E.

It is not an exaggeration to say, along these lines, that massive abuse of a majority by a minority takes place only in the context of absolute dominance of a piece of land. Refugees are capable of many crimes, but not organized, massive abuse. The Biblical prophets are quite clear on the relationship between organized crime and land ownership, and the removal of the privilege of land ownership as a result. [\[33\]](#)

Voluntary exile was a well-known way of experiencing life in an utterly new way that was practiced by saints in Jewish history. Especially communal leaders or rabbis who may be used to special, honorable treatment, would voluntarily exile themselves for a time, and thus experience a new and anonymous identity. It was a way of discovering humility, and loosening the attachment to their own egos. The ego is intimately related to, and exaggerated in false ways by attachment or over-attachment, to place and superior social position, the latter being a derivative of

permanent place. In Buddhism, as in some rabbinic approaches to Judaism, it is this over-attachment to place, position, and ego that is the basis of all misery (*dukkah*), as Buddhism expresses it, or sin (*he'et*) or the ‘other side’ (*sitrah ahrab*), as Judaism would phrase it. Exile heals this in providing a new perspective on ego and human attachments.

Extension of this understanding of sin and its consequences to conflictual relationships in the context of land is an interesting challenge that I leave in this work as a stimulus for further discussion. Here we are getting into methods of peacemaking that should be characterized as conflict transformation or even character transformation. Character transformation as a path of reconciliation is a clear principle in Abrahamic traditions, and we must think creatively in the future about how to translate this into workable practices of inter-group and inter-religious conflict transformation.

We will expand on this later, but for now let us just acknowledge that if terrible crimes have been committed over land disputes then the surrender of at least some cherished land, and the leaving of that cherished land, is a powerful way to transform relationships. But it requires acknowledgement of just how cherished that land is. For example, it has been tragic that as Israel has given up land that was part of the historical Holy Land, the secular, peace-oriented Jews who were willing to give it up in order to make peace expressed little concern for this lost property, at least publicly. But religious Jews, on the whole, who deeply felt the loss of the ancient, sacred land, had no interest in giving it up. They have therefore had a harder time facing and admitting the injustices perpetrated on Palestinians. Rather the focus is exclusively on what Palestinians, Arabs, and gentiles in general have done to them. But this is at least in part an expression of passionate love for a land that requires using any and all

arguments to prevent losing it. This is a traumatic loss, just as the loss of Palestine was such a traumatic loss for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. It would be better for all actors on all sides to acknowledge the sacrifice of land, and not dismiss it in such a cavalier fashion. Some will always act as if they are in a schoolyard, and, as they surrender something that they cannot have, will mock it as worthless. ‘Who wants Gaza anyway?’. But this mocks deep sentiments on both sides and helps no one. The truth is that the final status of two states will require the surrender of land dreams on both sides at a deep cultural level.

When land is given up, or when the rights to land are surrendered, such as Jews must do about the West Bank, as well as Palestinians about Haifa and pre-1948 Israel, this sacrifice of land must be mourned, acknowledged and honored in a fundamental way. The real heroes of this process of transformation from war to peace will be those who deeply cherish the land, who feel that they own it and that God gave it to them, but are willing to give up part of it, out of a sense of justice and a commitment to peace. The best gestures of peacemaking do not involve a begrudging surrender of what one does not really want anyway, but an act of sacrifice. It is necessary to point this out because often the other side will have to make supreme sacrifices as well, and they must come to understand that you are doing the same thing.

Let us move on to other methods. Repentance expressed through *piyyus*, a unilateral process of approaching the person or group that you have injured with words of kindness and reconciliation has obvious benefits, and the power of the rituals and acts recommended by Rabbi Hisda, mentioned above, is also self-evident. Formal ceremonies have a way of concretizing emotions and moments of transformation in a way that rational dialogues can rarely accomplish. We must be more creative about how to apply this to complex conflicts. They certainly cannot replace the negotiations

over the future relationship and security arrangements and distribution of power and resources that must take place. But they are an indispensable tool of transformation.

Finally, rational negotiations and dialogue can do nothing for the dead, the murdered on all sides. And the murdered weigh on survivors as a burden of indescribable pressure. In non-rational terms, this is the tremendous power that ghosts of the dead play in so many global traditions. Survivor guilt, in my experience, is a principal goad that motivates those who perpetuate conflict. The conflict is a way to keep the memory of the dead alive and the guilt of survival assuaged.

There is also an inherent moral problem with peacemaking, even the kind that seriously engages issues of justice and reparations. Nothing is so valuable to human beings than their lives and the lives of their loved ones. In deadly conflicts, this loss cannot be replaced. Therefore, we have a tendency in rational and even emotion-based peace processes to ignore the dead. Monetary compensation for their deaths is rarely brought up and feels obscene anyway. And yet it seems to me that the religious traditions cited here suggest that we have to try to address this anyway.

The formal methods of address at burial sites seem worthy of serious consideration as part of a complete process of peacemaking in deadly conflicts, especially those involving Jews, who have this embedded in either their current religious experience, or at least in their cultural consciousness. It is embedded as not only something expected when they are victims, but also, potentially, something they may be willing to do for victims of their own actions. What power this could have in conflict resolution is difficult to predict, but it is definitely worthy of experimentation, especially in conflicts involving Jews. Based on experience, as well experience of what is painfully missing, I argue that, if done well, this could be the decisive factor in moving reconciliation work to a new scale of global success.

THE INTER-RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER THROUGH SYMBOL AND METAPHOR

Let us now delve into the specific significance of the inter-religious encounter, and the power of symbol and metaphor. We will begin with the human face, a rich topic for social psychology, phenomenology, cultural studies, and, less well known, monotheistic ethics. It cannot be overestimated how important the human face is to the success or failure of human encounters. This has not been studied sufficiently in terms of conflict resolution, because the interaction between communications theory, social psychology, and conflict resolution theory, is spotty, dependent on the professional background of various theoreticians. Obviously, those with a background in communications and social psychology have the “permission” professionally, in terms of their home departments, to highlight the importance of these phenomena. No one in the academic study of conflict, however, has the permission or the background to examine the effect of religious and ethical sanctions on the experience of inter-human and face to face encounter. At best this is studied in terms of taboo, but the power of religious ethics to impact the effect of the use of the face on peacemaking goes unrecognized and unappreciated.

In terms of monotheism, the face and the eyes become a crucial test of love or hate, the beginning or end of relationship. Charisma, a critical characteristic of the Biblical figure Joseph, and the evidence of his chosenness by God, is expressed by way of those who “find [*hen*] favor (charisma, sweetness, compassion?) in his eyes”. [\[34\]](#) Many other examples abound. [\[35\]](#) The point is that pro-social relations begin with the eyes and with the look. This deserves a separate study. Clearly there are powerful effects of eyes on human behavior.

<p style='line-height:200%'>The nightmare converse of peacemaking in this regard is the strange way in which murderous people in any number of circumstances seem to go berserk when looked in the eye. Looking in the eye is regarded as a dangerous challenge, and this appears to be the case among various primates as well. [\[36\]](#) If the power of the eyes and face have such impact negatively it stands to reason that this is an untapped resource for training in pro-social engagement.

Monotheism understood well the power of the face, as we have noted above. Thus, in addition to the uses of facial imagery in a descriptive fashion in the narrative Biblical portions, like the Joseph stories, it naturally occurs in the prescriptive, legal portions of the Bible. One is commanded to honor or beautify the face of the elder in one's community, [\[37\]](#) but not to honor faces with partiality in terms of legal judgments, in other words to let justice take its course, without allowing charisma or anything else to sway a judge towards one party's face. Thus a balancing act of charisma and love, on the one side, must be maintained with the interests and needs of justice, on the other side.

There is also the notion of a hardness to the face which, in rabbinic Judaism, is one of the quintessential sins. [\[38\]](#) The alternatives of a kind face, based on *hen*, or a hard, murderous face, is rooted in the alternative presentations of Divine imagery in the Bible. [\[39\]](#) Now it is true that there are Biblical precedents for withholding the kind Divine face from certain groups of people. [\[40\]](#) Here I want to build on the constructive bridges within and between religious traditions.

<p style='line-height:200%'>Here is the most important point. The foundations and sanctions in all three monotheisms for the compassionate use of the face should be seized upon as basic to the peacemaking meeting, to training in peacemaking, to the evocation of peacemaking as a religiously sanctioned discipline. No cross-religious,

cross-cultural training in the Middle East should neglect to problematize the ways to greet and engage the face of the other. This has immense potential to help change processes, if utilized well, and to hurt those same processes in which this vital cultural phenomenon is neglected.

In Judaism, there are specific commandments to prohibit the whitening of the face, in other words humiliation which, in rabbinic metaphor, leads to a loss of blood to the face.[\[41\]](#) They seize on this as akin to murder, the shedding of blood. This moves us toward another key cultural/religious issue, honor and shame, one of the single most important issues in Middle Eastern conflicts.

HONOR AND SHAME

Honor and shame are central moral and spiritual categories in Jewish ethics. It is something so fundamental to proper human relations, and to adhering to the paradigm of God in Judaism that it seeps into the style and character of countless classical texts. It is not only an ethical precept. It is a way of being, a critical component of a metaphysical intentionality to the universe that has placed the human being in an exalted and responsible role of a caretaker. Therefore, the violation of human dignity is felt to be not only an ethical failure and an immense personal injury, it is also an affront to God and the Divine plan. Furthermore, because these traditions have such deep communal roots in the Biblical corpus, a personal affront to one human being is often seen as an affront to the Umma, in Islam, or Islam itself. In Judaism, an assault on the dignity of a Jew is an assault on a member of God's own people, and on the image of God implanted in the human being.

Each community and each religious tradition embodies different historical memories, however, and different ways of interpreting issues of honor and shame. Therefore, when Jews and Arabs gather together and begin to attempt peacemaking in a more lasting way than mere political negotiation, they had better expect that their response to issues of honor and shame are different but equally sensitive. But they should also anticipate that the active effort to make the recovery of honor a central axis of peacemaking will yield some powerful results, if they do this carefully, listening to each other, and accepting the humble processes of trial and error.

What will it take to restore lost dignity on all sides? What will it take for rejectionists in the Jewish camp to feel that it is not only by the gun that the value and dignity of a Jewish life can be restored in this world? What will it take for a Palestinian family and clan to recover dignity? What will restored dignity look like for those who have good resources and education, but a lost piece of property or village that will not be recovered? What will it take for those who have nothing in a refugee camp, and how much will the latter depend on the honest integration of cultural dignity and economic rights? What will restore honor?

These are questions that should be posed to all people on both sides about themselves and about the other. Of course, in the actual dialogic moment it would be obscene to tell the other side what it needs and does not need for dignity. That is not my intention. Rather, it is the empathetic psychology that I want to stimulate. The exercise, I suggest, of anticipating the other's dignity and shame is not an effort to supplant the dialogic moment of encounter, but rather an act of preparation for it.

The most important point is that conversations about honor and shame may have some beneficial results, but nothing can compare to carefully crafted gestures and symbols of honor, ways in which enemies convey honor to the humiliated other.

This is at the heart of peacemaking, and it is often completely overlooked by formal processes of peacemaking. Rarely, furthermore, have I seen a conflict in which both sides, no matter how many security or economic imbalances there may be, do not need and indeed crave gestures of honor from the other side.

FACE TO FACE ENCOUNTER, HUMILITY, AND SILENCE

Let us return for the moment, however, to the actual face to face encounter. This leads to the next categories, humility and silence, key ingredients of empathetic psychology. Silence and humility are rather strange gestures and phenomena to bring up in the same sentence as the Arab/Israeli conflict. If there were two ingredients missing from human relations in this region that I had to choose, they would be humility and silence. Perhaps that is why so many young Israelis have turned to Eastern religions, and have welcomed with open arms the likes of the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Han to Israel. [\[42\]](#)

A possible explanation of young Israeli interest in these religious leaders is that, on one level, one cannot imagine anyone who would irk the religious establishments of monotheism more than these Buddhist teachers. Most of those monotheistic leaders—both Jewish, Muslim, and conservative Christian, would consider these men idolaters in the classical Biblical sense. And the opportunity to do something just to spite a religious establishment that controls key parts of their lives is never lost in the Israeli culture wars.

On a deeper level, however, young people always help us perceive what is missing in a culture, what its great weaknesses are. A young person has not yet had to buy into the established culture formulated by adults, and therefore he or she becomes

an important barometer of tragic flaws. It is no surprise to me that these Buddhist teachers, who practice silence, laugh at themselves in ways unthinkable to monotheistic hierarchies, and speak, above all, and repeatedly, about humility and compassion to all living things, are the leaders that would attract young disaffected Israelis in search of spiritual solace. This is what is missing in life for many people of this region. These young people are happy to respect and accept the more unfamiliar and strange aspects of Eastern spirituality because, I argue, the underlying gentleness, humanity, and anti-argumentation, are things that they most lack in an environment that has made a tension-ridden state of no-war and no-peace into a cultural centerpiece. [\[43\]](#)

I do not blame the inhabitants of Israel and the Palestinian lands for evolving a culture of stress and argumentation. No one can pass judgment on how others cope with interminable violence, injustice, and fear. But I can diagnose what is wrong on a deep cultural, psychological and spiritual level, note how many are rebelling against this, and recommend future alternatives. It seems clear to me that, from a religious point of view, humility, silence and the wisdom of listening that emerge from compassion, have ample precedent in monotheistic literature, both as recommended moral behavior, and as deep religious experience. [\[44\]](#) This is not to disparage in any way Eastern resources on these matters, but rather to indicate a path of cultural regeneration for the Middle East.

Throughout Biblical and Qura'nic literature humility is a *sine qua non* of the human being's position before God. [\[45\]](#) It is a quintessential act of faith. In Judaism it is even portrayed as a Divine attribute to be emulated, [\[46\]](#) and for all Biblically-based religions, the great prophet of the Bible, Moses, is described as the humblest of all men. [\[47\]](#) As far as silence is concerned, the ritual practices of Judaism are rather

loquacious, in comparison to Buddhism, for example. Prayer is communal and loud; study is the same. But, in truth, Tibetan Buddhism has some pretty lively and loud elements to it that struck a number of Jewish observers as strikingly similar to old Jewish forms of study and debate. More importantly, the Biblical prophetic tradition is a tradition that is characterized by as much silent listening as it is by long speeches. After all, where do the monotheistic prophets receive their wisdom if not in silent listening in desert locations? More importantly, there are actual prescriptive traditions about the wisdom of silence and listening that we have just cited.

SACRED SPACE AS PEACEMAKING

The sacralization of space is one of the most powerful phenomena in human religions across the world. In polytheistic traditions this experience of sacralization can have a rather diffuse quality. By this I mean that since the sacred, and actual deities, can be located in many different locations and objects it could be argued that there is less intensity around exclusive ownership over particular sacred locations. This may or may not be true in the actual historical relationships of competing polytheistic tribes. It is quite possible that as the power and identity of deities merge with the land aspirations of a particular tribe or empire, the drive to be victorious over other “gods” and their holy places resulted in as much bloodshed as monotheistic wars over sacred space. But it must be admitted that the monotheistic vision of the world, from Biblical drives of conquest all the way to the Crusades and Mohammed’s conquests, has often expressed itself as a strong drive to create exclusive sacred space.

This is the main Abrahamic contribution to the Israeli-Arab conflict, with disputed sacred space everywhere. From the West Bank as Judea and Samaria for

Judaism to the holiness of Jerusalem for all three faiths, the sacredness of the space is the subject and object of the dispute for millions of people. Furthermore, as the conflict intensifies sacred space seems to become more and more—well, sacred, becoming centralized mythologically, in addition to more and more “holy” sites, such as burial places, somehow becoming discovered, or re-discovered, becoming the object of jealous veneration.

It is therefore required that we conceive of shared sacred space on many levels and with different kinds of compromises, Jewish-Islamic-Christian compromises, secular-religious compromises, and intra-religious compromises. Those compromises involve actual splitting of sacred spaces, but also the search, in a more profound sense, for shared sacred spaces, things that each conflictually related set of actors can discover in common in terms of the sacred.

Let us go to the heart of the matter by taking a pivotal crux and example. Some spaces on the Temple Mount need to be exclusive, while others can be shared based on agreed upon rules. With some careful work this can be justified in the respective religious traditions.

The following is even more important, however, in terms of truly creating a bridge between these communities and their sacred traditions. There can and should be ways in which those spaces as a whole come under the rubric of agreed upon moral rules that all agree should govern sacred space. This could involve a return to that original emphasis of sacralization in the venerated monotheistic prophets of the Hebrew Bible, namely the moral pre-conditions governing the entrance to sacred ground. [\[48\]](#)

All groups would agree to and participate in the aid to the poor, to those who suffer, as a part of the occupation of sacred ground. All would agree in that space to respectful and honorable modes of greeting and moral/spiritual etiquette that has roots in all three Abrahamic traditions. All would agree to special treatment of animal and plant life in the sacred spaces, rules that all the religions have embedded, and that could be utilized as the basis of healing cooperation. All have attitudes toward the respect for property of the other, and especially lost property. In other words, rather than a space of ultimate contention, shared sacred space would become a disciplined, ideal paradigm of the kind of religious morality that each tradition wishes to project outward toward the world.

Honesty is one of the primary characteristics of the person who has the privilege of entry to sacred space, and therefore agreed upon rules of honesty in speech and practice could also become a part of the sacralization of space in the contemporary situation. There are also laws governing respectful speech, and, last but not least, the respectful treatment of elders.

What parties to the conflict might consider doing is to redefine hermeneutically, but in a very conservative and conserving fashion, what sacred space is or was, and to complexify and dilute the obsession of sacred space defined exclusively in terms of ownership, particularly human ownership, basing themselves on the old monotheistic idea that ultimately everything belongs to God. [\[49\]](#)

This could be a powerful challenge to religious civilization as well as modern secular civilization in Israel and Palestine, because the latter is in search of a meaningful culture as well. These sacred rules of interpersonal engagement can or should have their counterparts in secular constructs and contracts that all would agree to abide by on sacred ground. The imposition of Abrahamic laws or principles of

moral behavior on sacred sites could empower the religious consciousness in a way that would make sharing the rest of society with secular civilization an easier project.

The emphasis of the negotiation and relationship building would be on what constructively could be agreed to by consensus, rather than bargaining over rules or principles that one knows the other party could not accept. Thus, we would begin from ground zero to a vision of all the values that could be the basis of a kind of treaty of the sacred space.

The same principles could apply to sharing the Hebron ancestral burial site, as another example, which, by the way, need not have anything to do with who owns the rest of Hebron.

Finally, this contractual commitment to sacred space could form the basis for a multi-religious treaty and secular-religious treaty on the long-term hopes for and commitment toward the governing of the entire Holy Land region as sacred space. Now this would not satisfy those for whom its sacredness is only vouchsafed by exclusive ownership, nor those who want to go further in disallowing any behavior contrary to traditional Jewish law or Islamic Shari'ah, as they interpret these laws. In other words, it will not satisfy those with messianic anticipation of theocracy and absolute control. But it will go a very long way toward creating a new and integrated culture of the region that will do the one thing that parties to a conflict need more than anything. It will acknowledge their claims as at least partially acceptable, it will give them the dignity of participation in the construction of public, civil society, and it could bring healing to those who are caught in the middle of these cultural struggles.

This will also require a re-visioning among fundamentalist visionaries in all camps for whom exclusive or coercive future visions take precedence over ethics.

What I am suggesting involves a vision that will not appeal to everyone but will include enough religious people on all sides to sideline a rejectionist monotheistic posture. It will offer an alternative vision of sacred space that does not require exclusive ownership to be religiously fulfilling.

SHARED LIVING SPACE AND RELIGIOUS VISION

The re-visioning of sacred space is only one challenge of the peacemaking process regarding land. The struggle for the same space for living is less symbolic but far more at the heart the conflict that has lead to enormous injuries and losses on both sides. These losses suffered by struggle over land are complexified by imbalances and complications in the losses. Palestinians in the tens of thousands lost their actual homes. Jews were the clear victors over land. Jewish losses of home and family in Europe, with 90% of European Jewry annihilated, cannot be blamed on Palestinians. And yet those losses are part and parcel of the struggle. These unfair asymmetries are a feature of countless inter-ethnic wars around the world, where one party pays for the injustices done to another by yet a third party.

Past losses make the need for land acute in the minds of millions of Jews, and these have been incorporated for thousands of years in Jewish prayers, long before Zionism. There are losses and needs here on all sides. Sephardi Jewry has a different set of losses that are related in a complicated way to the Arab world, as well as to the indignities of a prejudiced Ashkenazi superstructure to Zionism and the State. Each group's losses are tied to the land.

Actual loss of life at specific locations is one critical way to think about the use of land to heal the past and build a different future. Museums and memorials are

critical to a community's capacity to cope with its past. Mourning over lost life is very related to lost land because for many people the land and life on the land are inextricably related. But land is so contested in this conflict that each and every effort at memorialization will be the subject of controversy. Nevertheless it is better that it be pursued anyway as long as it is done bilaterally. The controversy could be utilized for constructive purposes.

I want to suggest that we consider the following. Burying the dead, memorializing the dead, and mourning, are gestures that are wedded to Abrahamic traditions. I suggest that religious people, leaders or lay people, jointly experiment with ways to lead their communities into an extended period of memorial and mourning. This will focus on the loss of life, and the loss of land, due to violence in this century that was experienced by each religious community for whatever reason, but especially when it was at the hands of the other groups. But it must be done in a way that each community shares in the memorialization with the other communities. There need to be numerous spaces created to remember, to acknowledge, to mourn, and to commit to a different path.

This can be done by the public sector as well, but care must be given to it not being co-opted for political purposes. For best results it is necessary that these bilateral processes become widespread and diffuse. In this way the very nature of the experiment will improve upon itself regularly, as the wisdom of what works and does not work in this particular multi-cultural context grows with each exchange. The nature of these exchanges would differ, for example, if it took place between liberal, secular actors, as opposed to if it took place between the very religious on each side. It would differ still if one managed to arrange this between relatively nationalistic

elements on both sides, such as settlers on one side, and Palestinian nationalists on the other.

How would this be done? Every place that Palestinians have died violently at the hands of Jews, for whatever reason and without judgment or blame, that place would become a place of joint mourning, memorial and commitment. Every place that Jews have died at the hands of Palestinians, for whatever reason and in whatever circumstance, would become a place of joint mourning, memorial and commitment. This would include all the sites of terrorist attacks, massacres, and violent confrontations of any kind. It would include Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem, for example, Deir Yassin, the corridor of the forced march from Ramallah, Hebron's burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, *meor'at ha-makhpelah*, as well as the site of the Yeshiva in 1929, major places of battle in the wars. Unfortunately there are numerous places available.

This process would have to occur over an extended period of time, and it would have to have an extensive bilateral basis. In other words, memorialization would have to take place in close bilateral proximity wherever possible, both in terms of time and space. In other words, it would be best if memorials that were close geographically were joined by simultaneous or near simultaneous ceremonies. Cemeteries where the victims are buried would be an equally suitable space of reconciliation.

To the degree to which each community is capable of expressing remorse, apology or request for forgiveness at these sites where death occurred this would be a major contribution to the healing process and the shift in relationship. However, my experience and that of others has suggested that this not be *de jure* or expected, but rather come naturally for those communities or individuals who are ready to do this. But some form of acknowledgement, respect, and regret, is essential.

The rituals and/or statements or prayers that would be appropriate in these places would have to depend completely on the parties themselves and what they deem appropriate. Minimally, there would have to be expressions of regret, if not acceptance of responsibility, as well as a commitment to a different future. The more that these were formulated in cultural and religious terms that bore the stamp of authenticity the better they would be.

It is clearly the case that this process will invite or provoke backlash in a number of forms for which anyone in this work must be prepared. First of all, the actual violation of this sacred space and time by rejectionists will become a critical need of theirs, a way of remaining true to the dead. Memorials are or become contested spaces, as Jewish memorials in Europe have become, and, therefore, subject to regular desecration. Jewish graves around the world are periodically subject to desecration, for the mere memorials dedicated to the Jewish dead becomes an affront to anti-Semites or to those who, for religious reasons, feel that Jews should simply not exist. The dead have a way of heightening our conceptualization of life, and that is why cemeteries are such beautiful but vulnerable places.

A constructive approach to conflict resolution utilizes all pain and provocation to further the process of reconciliation. One of the more insidious causes of conflict is the illusion of non-conflict, and the burial of crime. Memorials bring all of this into sharp relief, both symbolically and historically. The very backlash against these memorializations is a good reminder to those who would become complacent and fall into the illusion that the work of peace, justice, reparation, repentance, is over simply because there is no overt violence.

In sum, we have available to us a very wide array of cultural and religious resources in Judaism that can help effect profound change in the Israeli/Arab conflict.

Furthermore, for a variety of reasons, parallel institutions are ripe for development in Islam and Christianity as well.

We have before us a situation in Palestine and Israel, as of the winter of spring of 20001, that is deadly, dangerous and tragic. The lost opportunities of the peace process are too many to calculate. However, the most essential sin of the peace process was the complete neglect of human needs on all sides. This is especially true of those needs felt by everyone and anyone who was suffering the most physically and psychologically, be it: the millions of poor Palestinians, isolated settlers, the average person--Jew or Arab--living in fear of violence at his doorstep, angry and confused religious visionaries, or the misguided and desperate teenagers. Had their immediate and long term needs played a more significant role in the agenda of third parties, both governmental and non-governmental, it is doubtful that Palestine and Israel would have become so radicalized in recent months.

The parties to the conflict behaved very badly and we can easily trace the causes and effects of their brutality, callousness and deception, but that is unfortunately their role in conflict. It was up to the third parties to strongly guide them into a new relationship, people to people, not just engage a few of them as they engaged in an endless bargaining game of sophistical cleverness and ultimate irrelevance.

One can spend endless years deconstructing the political intrigues on both sides that may have been the triggers of the violence. But the triggers do not matter as much as the cultural and psychological despair that provides the gunpowder to those triggers. Thus, if we want to truly undermine the cycle of violence and the interaction of politics, militarism and cultural degeneration, then we must attack the heart of the

matter. And it must be done bilaterally, because the injuries and needs of both sides are different but equally pressing.

Therefore I want to conclude with a step by step de-escalation plan that encapsulates some of what I have discussed above. Much more is needed ultimately, but if only some of what I recommend below were put honestly into practice, it would create a reverse spiral away from violence and slowly toward a new relationship.

CULTURAL DE-ESCALATION PLAN FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

PREAMBLE

There will be no success to a strategic political plan at this point in time, no matter how rational it may be, unless there is a parallel effort to de-escalate the rage and fear that is propelling rejectionism and hardened positions in this conflict. One can speculate endlessly and argue about which side deserves greater blame for the current sequence of tragic events. A constructive approach, however, is to initiate strategically a bilateral set of actions affecting the general population that would allow the leadership on each side to achieve the necessary political space and communal consensus to move back to negotiations and toward a final settlement.

1. HOLY PLACES

Gestures of regret, honor and re-dedication should be made in every religious space that has been violated in Israel and Palestine in the last month. This includes the Dome of the Rock, Joseph's Tomb, in addition to various synagogues, mosques, and gravesites. These gestures should be bilateral, organized by a variety of existing inter-faith organizations, but endorsed publicly by leading political figures on both sides, in

addition to religious leaders on both sides. Third parties, such as the United States, need to make clear to both sides that this is a priority.

2. LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE

Loss of life is not only a human tragedy it is also a desecration of basic cultural and religious sensibilities. As such, mourning and joint expression of regrets can have the effect of reversing the cultural damage done by the infliction of harm in the last month.

3. THE INJURED

Efforts should be made to offer support to injured members of each community from the enemy community. There is evidence that this is taking place already in limited form, but, as with the other courses of action, it is given no support by the political leadership on all sides of this conflict. The effect of political endorsement would be dramatic.

4. FEAR

There is an overwhelming sense of fear that a majority of citizens feel in both communities about the future. Fear is a basic building block of hatred and political intransigence. Efforts must be made to build trust concerning the wishes and intentions of the majority in each community. The majority who have not participated in the violence and who do not condone excessive use of force are generally silenced by the political leadership. Ways must be found to foster greater communication between these majorities. Once again, there has never been any pressure on the political leaderships to consider this an indispensable part of strategic peacemaking.

The endorsement of political leaderships will generate the needed energy to renew and strengthen the already existing efforts in this regard. The Israeli public needs to hear the voices of average occupants of Palestinian towns on their fears, and Palestinians must hear Israeli fears, either directly, or through a major media campaign. Each needs to understand the life situation of the other.

5. JUSTICE, INQUIRIES INTO WHAT HAPPENED

It is hard to overestimate the importance of perceptions of injustice in conflict. Whatever the composition of governmental or non-governmental inquiries, it is critical to pursue a just and fair evaluation of what went wrong and who committed what excesses in the last month. If any international body manages to do this in a truly unprejudiced fashion it will help the process of recovery. The problem is that that most inquiring bodies are prejudiced by their pre-conceptions about the parties to the conflict, rather than an honest evaluation of the behavior of conflicting parties. The latter, however, would be a healthy contribution to creating a cultural foundation for a peace process based on justice.

Most importantly, the justice claims, and the rage emerging from a sense of injustice on the part of average Palestinians must become a part of the acknowledgments that will accompany the peace process. We cannot move forward without a better venue for the channeling of this rage at injustice. There are also a great number of people on the Israeli side who feel and claim a deep posture of injury due to injustice from Palestinians and, more generally, the Arab world. The violation of human rights when a Palestinian's land is summarily taken is well known, and the frequent mistreatment at borders self-evidently violates basic standards of human rights. But what is less acknowledged is that when you blow a Jew to bits in his fruit market in Jerusalem, that too is a violation of human rights. It too cries out for justice.

And if we cannot see and make justice and human rights blind then they will disappear like vapor from both communities. We must think about the establishment of some ongoing justice and reconciliation commission through which many of these issues can be addressed, and through which the victims and their families can be acknowledged.

6. HIGH LEVEL RELGIOUS MEETINGS, STATEMENTS, AND GESTURES

These are already underway, at least inside of Israel and in various settings globally, but not between Israel and Palestine. Furthermore, whatever efforts that have been made have not been endorsed, promoted, or even permitted by some of the political leadership. It is vital that the political leaderships be pressured to consider this vital to the peace process. This should include not only statements about a common monotheistic commitment to peace, justice, and the value of human life, for example, but also a concerted efforts to make religious gestures that demonstrate these values to the enemy. The key missing ingredient has been the permission by political leaderships to pursue this avenue seriously. And the latter have not received the proper international signals that this is vital.

7. THE SHIFT FROM THE CULTURE OF MILITARY FORCE TO POLICE FORCE, TRAINING

That there is a very large amount of guns available on either side of this conflict is a given. Clearly the Israelis have available the ability to escalate to much larger weapons such as gun ships, and have an extensive capacity for self-protection which has led to relatively few casualties despite the large amount of firepower directed at them. The critical need of the hour, however, is to re-establish a culture of policing, with all the responsibilities and sensitivities that this would require. Furthermore, it is vital that we do not return to the status quo ante, as if this were an acceptable

situation. Clearly it was not acceptable to the majority on the Palestinian side who have been moved to such massive violence. The status quo ante involved a great deal of bad policing, and utter insensitivity to basic issues of cultural and human dignity. We suggest an extensive training process that will be mandated for both sides of the conflict as to policing methods, the proper and proportional use of force, and methods of conflict prevention that emphasize cultural sensitivity and the utilization of cultural assets in the maintenance of peace or its restoration in the post-conflict setting. I already have some enthusiastic commitment to this at least by one division of the Palestinian police. But nothing will occur unless the leaderships on both sides are pressured by the international community of negotiators to consider this a vital step of peacebuilding.

8. THE POOR

Abject misery drives this conflict, as it does many others. Cultural and religious sensibilities around the world are really at the mercy of the damage that human misery wreaks on individual and collective identities. The disappointment with the peace process is substantially attributable to this. The poor have been pawns of one side of the conflict, and been utterly and callously ignored by the other side. It is vital to understand how much of the rejectionist politics on both sides receives its impetus from the relative deprivation of poor communities.

No peace process should move forward at a high level in the future without a parallel process of anti-poverty measures that are high profile and that lead to immediate, stage by stage results in the lives of people who are being asked to agree to the peace process. The current methods of anti-poverty associated with the peace process have been far too abstract, focused on infrastructure and subject to high levels of corruption that further alienated the majority from the peace process. We suggest

small loans to large numbers of people, for example, rather than large loans to the few. We suggest employment training available on some level to every young person. We suggest this on both sides of the Green Line, and it is critical that its ongoing efforts be directly and publicly associated with the peace process. There is ample international experience with grass roots, popular anti-poverty and development work. It needs, however, the endorsement of the highest levels of leadership for both financial and cultural reasons. It is a critical way to make the peace process also a justice process.

Mechanisms to include in some way the poorest refugee families in the Palestinian Diaspora would not only extend the justice process it would be a powerful symbol of where the final status negotiations are heading. Too many of the benefits of peace are being held for the very end, and it has become clear that there is no longer any patience for this. It was never a good idea. Ways must be found now to create a parallel kind of progress in the human and cultural realm to the relative political and military gains thus far.

9. HONOR

The valuation of human dignity and human life has been the greatest victim of this century of Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The majority on both sides feel intuitively that their enemies and even the rest of the world do not particularly value their existence. Too many Jews feel that the rest of the world will never understand their security needs because ‘they’, the gentiles, have never valued Jewish life. Palestinians feel abandoned by everyone, and humiliated by everyone, even some of their own leaders.

As a later stage of this de-escalation it is crucial that the political leaderships on both sides be pressured to find symbolic ways to honor the culture and identity of the other side. They must encourage their communities to do the same.

There is no greater issue of miscommunication between these sides than on the issue of honor. Most Israeli leaders and citizens do not understand how important honor and humiliation are in this conflict, and how much that fuels the rage against them. They tend to think culturally in exceedingly pragmatic terms, and do not understand why and when their adversaries refuse decent offers in negotiations. This is true in many conflicts where the side that has more power and more normalcy dismisses violence for the sake of honor as irrational and irresponsible. But the key to real conflict resolution and peacebuilding is for third parties to help each side understand their blind spots, what they are just missing about their own behavior and that of their adversaries. If third parties can manage to convey how important honor and basic dignity are in this conflict, it may help to significantly alter the spiral of belligerency and violence.

In so doing they will put in motion the opposite of a spiral of violence. Just as there are powerful spirals of violence that spin out of control there are often spirals of relationship transformation that can take place with the proper encouragement from third parties and leaders on both sides.

These, I humbly suggest, are the keys to a better future for these two battered peoples. Everyone, including the third parties, have their share of blame for this endless cycle of conflict. But the evidence of history suggests time and again that what appears to be utterly intractable, a permanent state of war, turns out to be limited to a certain time of history. Furthermore, it is possible for the cycle of violence to be repeated again and often, such as between France and Germany many times, and

then, one day, through human ingenuity, third parties, new arrangements, and some profound relationship building and cultural transformation, for a dawn of peace to come and to stay. This can happen in Israel and Palestine, with the thoughtful help of many committed people and institutions from around the world, who concentrate on the deepest needs of both of these people.

10. RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Judaism, Islam, Christianity, even Buddhism: they can all play a profoundly important role in the ethical, psychological, and cultural transformations of relationship that are necessary in this region. Evidence suggests that with humble and thoughtful planning, religious traditions play a crucial role in the reconstruction of broken human relationships. But it will take much more courage by religious people to extricate themselves from the shackles of violent or bigoted interpreters of their traditions. It will take the courage of secularists to shed their instinctive antipathy to organized religion and welcome religious peacemakers as allies. And it will take the maturity and humility of third parties to share their efforts at intervention with religious people of good will, from around the world, who want to and are capable of deepening the healing of these peoples in ways unavailable to standard diplomacy. If all these conditions are met then religious traditions could be the final element to transform the passions of hatred into the passions of forging new communities.

[1] See Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: the Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[2] See Sifre Be'Ha'alotekha 11; Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw ed.) Exodus 27. See also Midrash Tehilim 25:14, where Esau's hatred is actually justified due to the loss of the birthright.

[3] The Turkish Consul in France, Yolga Namik, repeatedly challenged the Nazis, defended and saved 400 Jews during World War II. He was a Muslim. And he was asked about this. “Yes, thanks be to Allah, as you say, I am a Muslim. But that does not at all signify that I feel differently from you French, or Jews, or whoever. That didn’t hinder me from saving Jews, on the contrary! It is the humane qualities in a person that are important. If a man is good, kind, God—be it the God of Allah, of Jews, of Christians, of other religions—God, then, will take you into His Paradise...it goes better for you if you begin at once to show love, to help one’s fellow man....” Marek Halter, *Stories of Deliverance: Speaking with Men and Women Who Rescued Jews From the Holocaust*, trans. M. Bernard (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, Carus, 1998), p. 194. This is a remarkable book that is quite relevant to issues of healing old wounds that we shall address later on. Notice here Yolga Namik’s intuitive hermeneutic of Islam. His Islamic concept of Paradise is a place for all good, kind people, which makes the effort to help fellow human beings on earth the principal vehicle to Heaven. The only ones not going to Paradise in his context were the Nazis and those that helped them.

[4] Talmud Bavli (henceforth T.B.) 133b

[5] The last phrase is a translation of *zehuyot* in this context only.

[6] T.B. Yoma 86b

[7] ibid.

[8] See, for example, Malachi 3.7; Zech. 1:7, and the important discussion in Ezekiel 18. On the rabbinic side, see the *Amidah*, the quiet standing prayer, of Yom Kippur, s.v. *Elokenu, ve’eloke avotenu, mehal*, in the standard Mahzor of Yom Kippur. This prayer is said every year on the Day of Atonement, many times. It reflects the notion of continuous forgiveness in response to the need every year to “wipe away” the sins of the people.

[9] *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985)

[10] This nuance is captured by the verb *maha*. See Ps. 51:3. It is also often associated with the washing away of sin.

[11] Many texts, including Micah 7: 18-20, emphasize the Divine quality of infinite patience, *erekh apayim*. The daily standing prayer, the *Amidah*, refers to God as a *mohel ve’sole’akh*, a Being whose essential quality or name is Forgiver and Pardoner. This emphasizes that forgiveness is built into a permanent relationship between God, the individual, and the community.

[12] See Micah 7:18; Proverbs 19:11.

[13] T.B. Haggigah 5a; T.B. Berachot 12b

[14] Avot of Rabbi Nathan 40:5, statement of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Yossi.

[\[15\]](#) T.B. Shabbat 105b

[\[16\]](#) T.B. Berachot 5b

[\[17\]](#) T.B. Yoma 86b; *Otzar Midrashim*, Gadol u’Gedulah 6.

[\[18\]](#) There seems to be a parallel structure of the moral human trait of *ma’aver al middotav*, occurring in early rabbinic literature (T.B. Ta’anit 25b), and the Divine quality of *ma’aver al pesha*, the wiping away of sin. In both cases, Divine and human, it involves a kind of surrender of justifiable indignation in order to achieve a higher moral goal of compassion and, above all, patience. See *Orhot Tzadikim* (n.d.; rpt. Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1946), chapter 4, 8, and 12.

[\[19\]](#) *Orhot Tzadikim*, chapter 4, 8, and 12

[\[20\]](#) Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, *Tomer Devorah* (rpt. New York: Feldheim, 1993), chapter 1, pp. 7-11. Cordovero continues (ad loc, pp. 17-19) with the effectiveness of never perpetuating one’s anger. Citing Exodus 23:5 on the Biblical commandment to help one’s enemy, he quotes T.B. Pesachim 113b, which suggests that the anger that one party feels to the other in this text is due to the fact that A witnessed B committing a crime, but does not have a second witness, and thus cannot bring B to justice. This makes A hate B. But the Bible instructs the believer to help this criminal with his burden anyway, as a gesture of love, in order to help B literally leave behind (a Midrashic re-reading of the phrase *azov ta’azov* in the Biblical verse) his sin. Thus, Cordovero applies this process of reconciliation even to those who one sees as violators of the norms of society or the norms of the Torah.

[\[21\]](#) It would be interesting to do a study measuring what we usually refer to as “unconditional love”, namely, the tendency to express strong levels of respect and love for loved ones even when they do things with which we profoundly disagree. Do those who have a tendency to be peacemakers have a strong quotient of unconditional love for loved ones relative to the larger population? Is there an inverse proportionality, wherein those who have greater tolerance for enemy groups have less tolerance for their own immediate love relationships? What evokes in some the human capacity to care, even in the context of extreme disappointment, is quite relevant to the study of conflict resolution.

[\[22\]](#) There are other religious values that involve the temporary suspension of judgment of others until one gets to truly understand them. This allows a vital space in the relationship that allows for open-minded listening, the prevention of rash judgments, but that also does not require the surrender of one’s values of justice. Ultimately maintaining a sense of justice requires passing judgment on the actions of others. But if it is coupled with a temporary suspension, training in listening and empathy, then it is likely that one’s sense of justice will become more nuanced and subject to compromise with the justice perspective of the enemy.

[\[23\]](#) See, for example, Jonah Gerondi (d. 1263), *The Gates of Repentance* (Jerusalem; New York: Feldheim, 1976). For a contemporary set of essays on repentance, see Pinchas Peli, *Soloveitchik on Repentance: The Thought and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).

[24] Maimonides' Laws of Repentance is to be found in his *Mishneh Torah*, the Book of Knowledge. For an English translation and commentary, see *Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah: a New Translation and Commentary*, by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger (New York; Jerusalem: Maznaim: 1987).

[25] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance, 1:1.

[26] Ibid. 2:1ff.

[27] T.B. Yoma 87a.

[28] We have in later Jewish history many texts of prayers for the graveside. Several are dedicated to asking forgiveness of the dead. See, for example, *Siddur for the House of Mourning*, eds. David Weinberger and J.J. Schacter (s.l.: Mesorah Publications and the Orthodox Union, n.d., ISBN 0-89906-774-3).

[29] The problem of the use of the word for peacemaking is too large a topic to be dealt with here. I dedicate a chapter to the critique of the word in peacemaking in my *Holy War, Holy Peace: Moving Religious Traditions Toward Peacemaking in the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2001).

[30] T.B. Yoma 86a.

[31] Personal Letter from Alan Canton, Sacramento, CA, June 29, 1999, circulated by Leah Green and the Compassionate Listening Project.

[32] Genesis 17:5

[33] Leviticus 26:34-35.

[34] Genesis 39:4

[35] Genesis 6:8; 34:11; Exodus 11:3; Esther 2:17. On charisma or grace as the most valued human asset, see Proverbs 22:1. It is a difficult word to translate but includes the meanings of grace, benevolence and favor, but with a special attachment to the facial metaphor. On the relationship of *hen*, and pity or compassion, *tahanunim*, see Zechariah 12:10. Zechariah has a vision of God who brings destruction on other peoples who are near Jerusalem, but who, at the same time, fills the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a spirit of *hen ve'tahanunim*, grace and compassion, as they lament over the dead of the *other* peoples, as if the dead were their own children, their own favored son or first born. This suggests a powerful prophetic precedent for the extension of *hen* to enemies, especially in the context of Jerusalem.

[36] See Stuart Altmann, "The Structure of Primate Communication," in Stuart Altmann, ed., *Social Communication Among Primates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp.

325-62; N.G. Blurton Jones, "An Ethological Study of Some Aspects of Social Behaviour of Children in Nursery School," in Desmond Morris, ed., *Primate Ethology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967), pp. 347-68. See generally under "eye contact", in *The Nonverbal Dictionary of Gestures, Signs, and Body Language Cues* (2000), by David B. Givens, at <http://members.aol.com/nonverbal3/refs.htm>, as of 11/17/00.

[37] Leviticus 19:32; 19:15; Exodus 23:3

[38] See, for example, T.B. Ta'anit 7b, based on Proverbs 21:29, where a hard or cruel face is identical with the essence of wickedness.

[39] See Psalms 34:17 on the face of God and the destruction of the wicked, but Psalms 42:3 on the desire to see the face of God. On beseeching the face of God and prayer, see I Kings 13:6; II Kings 13:4. On the face of God and destruction, see also Jeremiah 3:12; Ezekiel 15:17. Psalms 27:8 suggests a powerful reconciliation through the metaphor of the face. "On Your behalf has my heart said, 'seek My face'; Your Face will I seek."

[40] Deuteronomy 7:2

[41] In modern culture the biological reaction of the face turning red seems to be more associated with shame and embarrassment. I cannot account for this interesting difference. What they hold in common is that embarrassment leads to blood in the body being displaced by shame. Thus it is, in a sense, shed.

[42] See Yair Sheleg, "From Yiddishkeit to Yeshivashram," *Ha'aretz*, Friday September 29, 2000; Yair Sheleg, *Faith Healers*, April 21, 2000.

[43] It goes without saying that I speak here of the perception of Buddhism in the West, or the way in which it has been presented and hermeneutically developed by great contemporary masters such as the Dalai Lama. There is plenty of conflict and pettiness in the history of organized Buddhism that could be comparable to monotheistic history. Perhaps less bloody, however. This deserves a separate study.

[44] *Tractate Derekh Eretz Zuta* 1; *Avot of Rabbi Nathan* 15; For a representative collection of rabbinic approaches to humility, see Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, trans. Shraga Silverstein (Jerusalem-New York: Feldheim, 1969), chapter 22. There are numerous sources on silence and its relationship to understanding. See Midrash Rabbah (Margoliot ed.) Leviticus 16:5; Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw ed.) *Va'ye'tseh* 6; Otsar Midrashim Alpha Beta d'Ben Sira, paragraph 19; *Tractate Derekh Erets Zuta* 7; T.B. Pesahim 99a.

[45] See, for example, Qur'an 7:161; 57:16

[46] See Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy 7:12; Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw ed.), Bereshit 4, Vay'erah 8, Ki Tisah 15.

[47] Numbers 12:3

[48] See Psalms, chapters 15 and 24, as examples of an entire literary genre of “entrance Psalms”, which provide the proper conditions for entrance to the Temple. This suggests the possibility of an entirely new approach to sacred space. Entry may be viewed as not a right of any person or group but a privilege that is pre-conditioned. Thus, it does not deny or even minimize the importance of sacred space, as modern liberal approaches might, but it does deny it as a right of anyone, but rather a reward for a moral existence. This puts everyone who claims ownership on notice, and makes the moral pre-conditions primary. In the context of conflict over sacred space it almost necessitates conflict resolution as a pre-condition of entry, given the fact that it is almost impossible to carry on intractable, bloody conflicts and then enter the sacred space with clean hands, as the Psalms demand. From a just war point of view, this is especially true in modern warfare where, in a bizarre reversal of history, civilians, women and children, are the primary victims (sometimes the primary targets) and soldiers are the most protected class of people in the civilizations in question. This is true of most inter-ethnic warfare today.

[49] Leviticus 25:23 ; Psalms 24:1; 50:12